

Direct Connect



Christian Reformed
Home Missions

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Connecting

"Be assured that from the first day we heard of you, we haven't stopped praying for you, asking God to give you wise minds and spirits attuned to his will, and so acquire a thorough understanding of the ways in which God works. We pray that you'll live well for the Master, making him proud of you as you work hard in his orchard. As you learn more and more how God works, you will learn how to do your work. We pray that you'll have the strength to stick it out over the long haul-not the grim strength of gritting your teeth but the glory-strength God gives. It is strength that endures the unendurable and spills over into joy, thanking the Father who makes us strong enough to take part in everything bright and beautiful that he has for us." (Colossians 1, *The Message*)

Paul's prayer for the Colossians is our prayer for you. As you connect with others through Coffee Break, Story Hour and Little Lambs, be encouraged by the courageous faith of our Korean brothers and sisters. Learn why honesty is still the best policy, and that leading vulnerably is worth the risk. In this issue Brown Bags turn into Gourmet Feasts, and Jelly Beans turn into a prayer. Many resources and opportunities are offered, and a click will lead you directly to more information. Thanks for connecting with us!

--The Small Group Leadership Team

Courageous Faith



Women, men, teens and children from the United States, Korea, China and Japan gathered in San Juan Capistrano, California, on July 9-12 for the Korean Coffee Break Conference. Using the Old Testament book of [Joshua](#), keynote speakers and small groups challenged all ages to develop

Courageous Faith. Testimonies of how God has used Coffee Break to transform lives gave evidence to the courageous faith of many men and women. Here are some of the responses to the question *What is Coffee Break to you?*

- Through Coffee Break I've become a new person.*
- Through God's Word I feel grace deeper and deeper and that is God's blessing.*
- Coffee Break has allowed me a paradigm shift in the way I speak and think and helped me realize that all Christians are leaders.*
- Because of Coffee Break I came to America.*
- In our church almost everyone has joined a Coffee Break. We realize now that we need to influence others who are not in our church.*
- Through Coffee Break my personality changed and my home and family are happier.*
- Coffee Break centers are like homesteads - a mother's place.*
- I realize I learn more as I lead and the words become mine.*
- Because of Coffee Break I can now share conversations about the Bible with my husband.*
- I was challenged at the Coffee Break Conference to reach non-believers.*

How do you see *courageous faith* evidenced in the lives of the women who come to your Coffee Break? Perhaps you want to have a *Blessing Box* near your refreshment table this year. Have 3x5 cards beside the box and encourage women throughout the year to write on a card how they are blessed through Coffee Break. Encourage them to share how Coffee Break has increased their faith. Periodically have a Celebration Time to give God the glory for these Coffee Break blessings and evidences of women practicing courageous faith that changes lives.

A Must-Read

How do you prepare for a new season of Coffee Break and Story Hour? Recruiting leaders, selecting study books and advertising your program are probably the first things that come to mind. Reading (or re-reading) the *Coffee Break Evangelism Manual* is highly recommended for all directors and leaders. Every leader who attends the Coffee Break leaders training receives this manual with her training packet. It can also be ordered directly from Faith Alive Resources (1.800.333.8300 or www.FaithAliveResources.org). Pour yourself a cup of coffee, find a comfy chair and spend an hour refreshing your heart on the purpose, foundation and structure of Coffee Break small groups. Reading this small booklet will help you remember why you rearrange your schedule every week so you can lead Coffee Break!

Leading Vulnerably



After several years away from leading Coffee Break, I was delighted to be invited to lead in our new Florida church home. I joined midway through the season, and the former leader stayed on as my assistant, a role she preferred rather than leading.

I quickly learned that I was the outsider of this group and needed to find a way to connect. They knew one another; they didn't know me. They knew the routines and rhythms of their Coffee Break relationships; I didn't. And though I did all the things I had taught others to do in leadership training workshops, my group was not talking. I felt like I was failing miserably. It was pretty humbling.

I prayed about it. I shared it with the other leaders and asked for their input. Nothing changed. Finally I simply leveled with the group. "I feel like I'm not connecting with you," I said. "What am I doing wrong? Are you uncomfortable with my leadership? Would you rather I didn't lead?" I assured them that would be fine with me, that I truly wanted Coffee Break to be a positive experience for them. I didn't want to keep them from enjoying their small group experience. "I can't do this alone," I told them. "This is your group, not mine."

Slowly they began to share why they were holding back. The reasons were varied, but everyone seemed surprised that I felt disconnected and like a miserable failure. They assured me they wanted me to lead. Together we started over, awkwardly at first, but with a new sensitivity to one another. Each of us "owned" the group by contributing to it. I knew we were making progress when, at the end of the next lesson, one of my group members said, "We all go out for lunch together after Coffee Break. Would you like to join us?"

Sometimes honesty really is the best way to handle a difficult situation. Although it may feel a little risky, leading vulnerably may model exactly what your Coffee Break group needs in order to become all it can be.

--Betty Veldman Wieland



Trivia Question: *When and where was the first Coffee Break convention held?*

Small Group & Evangelism Conference 2008

For decades Home Missions has been committed to training and equipping leaders for evangelistic ministry. Coffee Break, Story Hour/Little Lambs and Small Group Leaders find the biennial conference to be a source of motivation and inspiration.



Reserve July 18-20, 2008, for the next *Small Group and Evangelism Conference*. It will be held at the Westin Hotel in Lombard (Chicago), Illinois. Worship and plenary speakers will build on the theme, *In Community*, based on Zephaniah 3.

You will have an opportunity to choose breakout sessions that will train and equip you for ministry. Experience *community* as you network with others from across the continent. You will be blessed!

Trivia Answer: 1984, South Side of Chicago



Brown Bag Lunch Turns Into a Gourmet Feast

Brown Bag Lunches can be quite an ordinary fare: a peanut butter-jelly sandwich, an apple and an Oreo cookie. Or, they can be quite delightful: a chicken-salad croissant, raspberries and crème and a chocolate truffle. Many Coffee Break and Story Hour leaders in the Chicago area met together over Brown Bag Lunches to talk about the blessings and challenges of evangelistic small group leadership. Along with the region's Small Group Ministry Developer, the leaders learned from each other about priorities and issues they all experience: establishing a vibrant prayer foundation for Coffee Break/Story Hour, making the best use of leaders' meetings and dealing with a fearful mother and child. They dreamed together about expanding their experience into a broader ministry opportunity, like connecting Coffee Break/Story Hour with a MOPs ministry or with a Beth Moore video study group. The peer learning and networking that happened over Brown Bag Lunches was invaluable. In was a gourmet feast for all who came. Why go about ministry alone when we can do it together?

--Ruth Kelder



Telling God's Story - To All Ages

Here is a poem you can print on a card, attach to a bag of colored jelly beans and tell God's story! Written with children in mind, this is a fun way to share the gospel with children of all ages!

***A bagful of jelly beans, colorful and sweet,
is a prayer, is a promise, is a loved one's
treat!***

The New Jelly Bean Prayer

Red is for the blood He gave,

Green is for the grass He made,

Yellow is for the sun so bright,

Orange is for the edge of night.

Black, white, brown, yellow and red is for the children He made

All of these colors receive the grace He gave,

Purple is for the hour of sorrow,

Pink is for the new tomorrow.

"The greatest evangelistic window currently available is among young children." (George Barna)
History and experience both reveal that children are a fertile mission field for the gospel.

http://www.kidzplace.org/site/c.chJKJXOAJIH/b.316991/k.465A/Introducing_Children_to_Christ.htm

(Adapted from *Sharing God's Special Plan with Children Training Manual* and *God's Special Plan for Children Witnessing Booklet*, Both available through LifeWay Christian Resources)

Resources



[Story Hour and Little Lambs Story Cards](#) are an evangelistic tool that connects your ministry to the home. Many evangelism committees/budgets supply these cards that provide children with an age-appropriate story Bible. [The Little Lambs Story Cards](#) have a special feature called "Family Time" that give parents simple ways to live out the story with the children, and language to talk, sing, or pray together.

Practical idea: keep a manila envelope with each child's name and their packet of story cards inside. If a child misses a week or two, you can give the cards missed. At the end of the year provide the child with the remainder of the cards to provide a complete Story Bible.

Discover Your Bible (DYB) has several new options for Coffee Break groups. [Discover Your Bible](#) Discover Genesis has been revised and condensed into two books. Part One, titled [Discover Genesis: Creation and Covenant](#) (12 lessons covering Gen. 1 - 12:18) is available. Part Two, titled [Discover Genesis: For All Generations](#) (12 lessons covering Gen. 12:19-50:26) will be released on or before November 1.

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